

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Ruth L. Munro

*"When I went to [Kō'ele Grammar] School up there, I was the only Haole in the whole school. It was interesting. . . . A lady would ring the bell and then we would all go and stand in line. I guess it was the different classes. And then she had two records, I think. And she'd wind up the Victrola, and I guess she played one side one day and the other side the next day or whatever. And then we'd have to turn around and they had a flagpole and we would salute the flag, and then after that, we'd march into our rooms. . . . And in those days, if you did something wrong, you got the ruler on your hand. And if you jerked your hand you got two spanks on the ruler."*

Ruth L. Munro is the daughter of James T. Munro, George Munro's son and former Lāna'i plantation engineer for Hawaiian Pineapple Company. He is credited with the planning and construction of Lāna'i City.

Ruth was born in Honolulu and came to Lāna'i at a very young age. She lived with her father, grandparents, and aunts in Kō'ele in the ranch manager's home.

She attended Kō'ele Grammar School until the second grade. She subsequently attended Hanalei and Punahou Schools in Honolulu, returning to Lāna'i for vacations.

Graduated in 1941, she attended the University of Hawai'i, University of Oregon, and Phillips Commercial School in Honolulu. She worked for the Bank of Hawai'i and for American Express before obtaining her real estate license.

Ruth currently is an independent realtor in Honolulu. She lives with her aunt, Ruby Catherine Munro, in the same home George Munro purchased in the 1920s.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ruth L. Munro (RM)

January 20, 1989

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN) and Mina Morita (MM)

[NOTE: Also present at the interview was Ruby Munro (RCM), RM's aunt.]

WN: This is an interview with Ruth Munro on January 20, 1989 in Honolulu.

Okay, well, Ruth, let's start by having you tell us when you were born and where you were born.

RM: Nineteen twenty-three (chuckles).

MM: Your birth date.

RM: April 12th, '23.

MM: Where?

RM: Here.

MM: Honolulu?

RM: Mm hmm.

MM: And your parents' names?

RM: James T. Munro, and my father's second wife, Frances Devitt Munro.

MM: And what was the circumstances that took you to Lāna'i?

RM: Oh, 'cause Daddy was there.

(Laughter)

MM: Your family moved from O'ahu to Lāna'i?

RM: Right.

MM: Okay. About how old were you?

RM: I must've been about. . . . I don't remember. I was a little kid.

MM: Infant little or how little?

RM: I don't remember going so I must have been very little.

MM: And is it your father's job?

RM: Yeah.

MM: Took him there? What did he do?

RM: I think he was what they called plantation engineer.

MM: So he was with . . .

RCM: Hawaiian Pine.

RM: Hawaiian Pine.

MM: About what year was this?

RM: I don't know. I imagine around---I was born in '23, someplace, maybe '24, '25, someplace around there.

WN: Well, according to your father's little paper on water ["Record of Water Supply on Lana'i"], it said that he became the [Hawaiian Pineapple Company's Lana'i] Plantation engineer in 1926. So it was about . . .

RM: I guess so, right.

WN: Prior to that he was here on O'ahu working?

RM: He worked on Maui, too, but don't ask me 'cause I don't know all those questions.

(Laughter)

WN: Yeah, that's right. So as a little girl you moved to Lāna'i?

RM: Yeah.

MM: Did you go to school on Lāna'i?

RM: Yeah, up on the hill [Kō'eale Grammar School]. Kindergarten and first grade.

MM: And then what happened?

RM: Then, they sent me down here [Honolulu] to school [Hanahauoli]. Second grade.

MM: So when you came back to O'ahu to school, . . .

RM: I stayed with two of my aunts [Georgina [Munro Meyer] and Ruby Munro] who were here [in RM's present home]. My grandfather had bought this house and they were living here. And then I went to school here. And then I went home in the summers.

WN: What kinds of things would you do on Lāna'i as a little girl?

RM: Not much to do because there's nobody to play with.

(Laughter)

RM: Same old story. I used to climb trees and wander around and swing, hang by my knees. I was a real tomboy.

MM: So did you live up in the ranch area?

RM: Yes, right. In the ranch [manager's] house.

MM: I see. That threw me for a loop. I always had this picture of you living in Lāna'i City (chuckles).

RM: No.

MM: Oh. So could you describe the ranch house?

RM: Yes, it was a great, great big old rambling house with a wide veranda all the way around it, from the front entrance past the living room, all the bedrooms, around the dining room, back to the kitchen. And I used to ride my tricycle on there, back and forth.

MM: And it was a wood structure?

RM: Yes, wood and corrugated iron roof. Made lots of noise when the rats ran over it or the rain came or whatever. The big [Norfolk] pine tree used to catch fog and then it would drip. Big drops would drop on the roof. You can always tell when it was foggy.

MM: I know earlier, I guess it was Violet [Gay] that said that they collected water.

RM: Yes, that's why Grandfather used to plant those [Norfolk pine] trees 'cause they would condense water and drip.

MM: So is that the reason for the corrugated roof and the tree right next to it to drip water?

RM: Oh, I don't think that was the reason, but that was standard roofing, practically, especially if they had to catch water.

MM: Was that your drinking water?

RM: That was before my time, because we had reservoir water by that time. But there was a big sort of a pond thing at the front door. And I think that used to be a cistern where they caught water. I'm not sure. But then they [later] used it as a swimming pool for a while. And then they filled it in and made a lily pond out of it. But by the time I was a little kid, they had regular water out of the taps that came from the reservoir and the underground water.

MM: You had indoor plumbing?

RM: Yes, we had indoor plumbing.

(Laughter)

WN: Was the ranch house first to get indoor plumbing?

RM: I don't know. I would think so. But down in the city, I think they had bathhouses. I don't think they had bathrooms in the houses. I don't know. I knew they used to have bathhouses. Whether they were the kind where they sat in the hot tubs or not, I don't know.

WN: I see. While you were growing up, your grandfather [George C. Munro] was still the [ranch] manager?

RM: I think so. He bought--he moved down here [Honolulu], but he was still managing up there. Is that right? And . . .

RCM: He'd go back up there.

RM: Yeah. Then he'd go back up every month, I think, on the old Sikorsky planes. And I don't know how long that went on.

MM: When you were traveling between Lāna'i and school, did you travel on planes, also?

RM: No, no, Humu'ula. Six bucks.

(Laughter)

MM: On what now?

RM: The Humu'ula.

MM: Humu'ula.

WN: It's an inter-island steamer.

RM: They did have planes, but I guess they came a little bit later. I know Grandfather used to go up on the planes after he moved down, but I went up only once on the plane. I don't know why it was. I went up just once. They put me on the plane and it was rainy that day. And one of my uncles that was driving us to the airport stopped at the service station to put gas in the car, and he told

the gas attendant that I was going to get on the plane and that if there was rain in the tank, we would crash (chuckles). That was a dirty trick.

(Laughter)

RM: Anyway, it was uneventful. But the airfield used to be just below the ranch house.

MM: Where the golf course is?

RM: No, no, down below more. Maybe a mile down. And you could almost see the plane coming and [you'd] get in the car and get there, 'cause, you know, it wasn't that far away. And it was just a wind sock, and there was a ladder that was leaning up against the wind sock. And the pilot would get out, get the ladder, put it up against the plane, open the door, the people would come out of the top and down the ladder, and then he'd close it up, put the ladder back.

MM: So it wasn't--it was just a . . .

RM: Just a field, a grass field that was mowed, I guess, once in a while. And nothing fancy. (Chuckles)

WN: Did you have brothers and sisters?

RM: Oh, I have a sister that's younger than I am [Joanne Tait Munro Dickson]. But she didn't arrive on the scene until, what, '34, '35 someplace around there.

WN: So you were more or less an only child.

RM: I was an only child so to speak.

MM: Could you describe the ranch area more in your time?

RM: Well, it was nice. We had a really big yard and there was a lily pond that I used to love to play in. Sometimes we'd get up early and go with hook and line to the reservoir and catch goldfish. And then take 'em off the hook very carefully, put them in a bucket, bring them back, and put them in the fishpond.

(Laughter)

WN: How big were they?

RM: Goldfish. Oh, sometimes like this, quite big, . . .

WN: Six inches.

RM: Goldfish, yes. They're in the reservoir. Maybe they were carp, I don't know. Not fancy kind, you know, with markings.

And, I don't know, wasn't too much to do. I used to read quite a bit. And they had all kinds of trees to climb. There was a rose apple tree at the front door and lots of (avocado) trees, alligator pear, and eucalyptus trees and strawberry guava. Sometimes in the evening, the girls who did the cooking would go look for chicken eggs. And sometimes the chickens didn't lay in the nest. They'd go out in the long grass and we'd go wander around and gather eggs that way.

MM: So you never had a chicken coop?

RM: They did but they used to let them out. I guess they felt they could go scrounge for themselves a little bit. So, they would let them out. Not in the yard, it was outside the yard where they'd let them out. Otherwise, they'd get into the vegetable garden.

WN: What was the garden like?

RM: Well, it was just big. Lots of grass. I don't know how big it really was. It must've been maybe an acre yard, I don't know how big it was. It was pretty big. Some parts of it nobody ever went for some reason. It just sort of went wild. And for a while we had ducks, and what else. Not many pets. They had cats. There was one, an old tomcat. He had asthma. Daddy was very fond of him, Old Tom.

RCM: Oh, really?

RM: Yes. And he lived to be a ripe, old age. He would drool and wheeze away and wheeze away. And the cats on the back porch always slept so they were touching each other. Sometimes there'd be four or five cats and they'd always sleep so at least their tails would touch. It's interesting.

RCM: Yeah. It was quite interesting.

MM: In your grandfather's manuscript ["The Story of Lāna'i"], you know, he talks a lot about the dogs.

RM: Oh, yes, he had hunting dogs. We didn't have any pet dogs. They were hunting dogs. In my time, he had a female, a short-hair, whitish dog with brown spots and brown head. German pointer? Her name was Shanty. And she's a very good hunter. And then, I think, too, when they had sheep, they used to have the sheepdogs. Didn't Grandfather have sheepdogs?

RCM: Yes.

RM: But that was before my time.

MM: Did they use the dogs to herd cattle?

RM: Not herd the cattle but they'd herd the sheep. But by the time I

was on the scene there, there wasn't any more sheep, and Grandfather's dog was just a hunting dog. It wasn't a pet or anything.

WN: Did the ducks hang around the reservoir?

RM: No, the ducks were in the backyard, in a pen. They were bought from somebody down here. Some man had ducks for sale and I remember going when they were bought. It was the pretty kind of ducks, you know, all kinds of pretty, blue-green [feathers] on their wings and things. But I don't remember eating duck. That's what they were supposed to be for, but I don't remember eating any. They raised rabbits for a while, but I wouldn't eat rabbit. I don't like to eat rabbit.

WN: What did you eat? What kind of food?

RM: Well, by then they had the butcher's stores downtown and they bought from--the Japanese store was Okamoto and the Chinese store was Yet Lung. And each store also had a butcher's shop and sometimes they'd get whatever came in. Sort of like what we do now.

MM: When you were up at the ranch, was the ranch store still open?

RM: No, I never saw a store. I do remember watching them dish out poi, one time.

RCM: Oh, yes.

RM: The big poi barrel. They would ring the bell that was over the bookkeeping office place. And they had this great big barrel--at least it seemed big to me 'cause I was a little kid--and this man would reach in there and take a handful of poi and do that [RM shakes her hand]. Everybody brought these big pans and they would scoop it out and flip it in there. And I guess everybody got X-number of handfuls or whatever. I don't know how they did it, but that was it. I don't know where the poi came from.

RCM: Lahaina.

RM: From Lahaina?

WN: Did you eat poi?

RCM: Oh, yes.

RM: I don't remember eating poi.

RCM: Don't you remember eating poi?

RM: I'm sure I didn't like it. I was a fussy eater.

(Laughter)



RCM: She was a fussy eater.

RM: I didn't want any food touching each other (chuckles) and don't put gravy and (chuckles) all that kind of stuff. They used to have tripe and mutton curry and all these kinds of things that wasn't for kids (chuckles). I used to pour out the milk into the flower vase.

RCM: Oh, she was terrible. And she was real picky. And she used to---I found very often, after I cleaned up the kitchen, you know, I'd find this milk.

RM: In the flowers. (Chuckles)

RCM: Milk in the flowers, in the flower container. Ruth was terrible. She did that all the time.

WN: So what did you eat? What were your favorite foods?

RM: Well, I ate mostly what was put in front of me. You know, we didn't have hamburgers and hot dogs in those days. But, I didn't want the food touching each other, and I didn't want gravy slurped on things. And I ate the vegetables first to get rid of it, and then I ate the potato or rice, and then I ate the meat last.

(Laughter)

RM: I hated casseroles. I had one aunt [in Honolulu] that made casseroles all the time. She would clean out the icebox and put all the leftovers in a casserole. It was atrocious. (Chuckles)

WN: In your day [at the ranch], who was the cook?

RM: Up there? Oh, we had people in the kitchen. When I was a little kid, we had Masu and Kita.

MM: Masu and. . . .

RM: Masu [Masuka Abe] and Kita. And then, we had Ellen, and then we had Shige. Shige moved down here [Honolulu] and we used to see her once in a while. She lived down behind the art academy [Honolulu Academy of Arts].

MM: You remember her last name?

RM: Oh, I don't. You know, she had one son. I don't remember what his name was either.

RCM: [To interviewers.] You kids should have come up here about . . .

RM: Forty years ago.

RCM: Forty years ago.

(Laughter)

RM: They weren't born yet.

(Laughter)

WN: Who else worked around there? Do you remember other names of the yardman or . . .

RM: Yes, there was [Eizo] Abe. Abe was Masu's husband, I think. And they lived right close to the office there when you went into the camp.

WN: Do you remember big dinners with people that came in?

RM: No, 'cause that was pau by the time I was there. I do remember, I think it was one Christmas, I'm not sure. Everybody in the family went up there. I must have been about four or five, I don't know. Five. Six. The dining room was big, and they had this great big table. And the whole table was full and they had these things that you used to pull apart and they would pop. I don't know what they'd call 'em. They were fancy. They had them at dinner parties. And inside, right after it popped, was a paper hat. And there was usually a little piece of paper that told you something. I guess it was a fortune-type thing or something. And then it had a little, sort of a gift-type thing, you know. Probably worth half a penny in those days (chuckles). But some little thing like that and the whole table was like that. They must have had a lot of people there.

RCM: They had a lot of people.

RM: But I don't remember big parties too much 'cause they didn't have those hunting parties when I was there, except sometimes all the aunts and uncles would come and visit, I guess, during their vacations. But I don't remember that much.

WN: What about Christmastime, what do you remember?

RM: I don't remember Christmas except one time. I do remember one Christmas when I was going to hang up my stocking and they insisted I hang up one of theirs. This is what spoiled Santa Claus for me (chuckles). They insisted I hang up one of their stockings. And then the next morning, there was this golf bag in it. Child's golf bag. Well, I put two and two together, you know. Why would they want me to hang up their long stocking if they didn't know what was going into it, you know.

(Laughter)

RM: They blew it.

(Laughter)

WN: You were a non-believer since then.

RM: Since then, I've wised up, right.

RCM: Who did that?

RM: I think it was Georgie [Georgina].

RCM: That's awful. (RM chuckles.)

RM: Anyway. So much for that.

MM: Do you remember any more things about the ranch areas?

RM: No, I don't particularly. You know when you're a kid, you just take things as they are. You don't really pay too much attention. I used to have a little black bunny that I used to take back and forth with me when I would go home for a vacation on the Humu'ula. I came down to school end of one summer and when we're going to get off, they said he wasn't off yet. And then we went back to get him and he was gone. And I remember being very upset 'cause none of the grown-ups would go and help me find my bunny. I think somebody swiped him and ate him.

WN: Oh, this is a real bunny?

RM: Yes, a real bunny.

WN: Oh (chuckles).

RM: Little Blackie. Cute little bunny. When I was about eight or nine, I guess.

MM: Did you travel back and forth by yourself?

RM: Yes, I did. I was a very good girl. I wasn't naughty and things like that. Didn't fool around. They put me on board. They'd take my ticket and I'd go and stay in my stateroom. Or, not being a good sailor, I would hang over the windward side and keep in the fresh air. I used to stand up most of the way (chuckles). If I went in my cabin, I'd get sick. So mostly, I stayed on deck.

WN: So then you were about the only child living in that ranch [manager's house] area?

RM: Yes, right.

WN: There weren't other cousins or anything?

RM: No. In fact, when I went to [Kō'ele Grammar] School up there, I was the only Haole in the whole school. It was interesting. They used to play in the morning. A lady would ring the bell and then we would all go and stand in line. I guess it was the different

classes. And then she had two records, I think. And she'd wind up the Victrola, and I guess she played one side one day and the other side the next day or whatever. And then we'd have to turn around and they had a flagpole and we would salute the flag, and then after that, we'd march into our rooms. I think my first teacher there, her name was Miss [Nellie] Richardson. I'm not sure, but I think that's her name. And in those days, if you did something wrong, you got the ruler on your hand. And if you jerked your hand you got two spansks on the ruler. The hand. Sore. She didn't tap it. She came down like this.

RCM: She was kind of mean.

RM: Yes, she was kind of a mean lady for some reason, right. And she---we had a May Day program. And this little boy was supposed to be the caterpillar before it turned into a butterfly. And she had this sort of a gunnysack thing that was dyed green and he was supposed to wear that. And he wasn't going to wear that for anything. And she took her blackboard pointer and she beat him with that on his legs, and she broke it.

RCM: Oh, golly.

RM: Broke it on his legs. Poor kid. He cried and cried and cried. I remember that very much. I bet he remembers it, too.

RCM: Poor kid.

RM: Poor little kid, yes, was only in first grade. Just a little boy. And, what else? That's about it.

WN: Did you walk to school?

RM: Yeah, 'cause it's just over the gulch. Just down that little gulch. It wasn't far. And walk home.

MM: How big was the class?

RM: I don't know how many people were in the class. I know we had little tables. One time, a little boy, when the teacher had her back to the class, I don't know what she was doing, jumped on his chair, and then jumped up on the table. And then jumped back down again. And I thought that was great. So I did it and got caught, got sent home. (Chuckles)

RCM: That's too bad, huh?

WN: That's rotten luck.

RM: Unfair, right?

(Laughter)

RM: Otherwise, I was a good kid. I didn't do naughty tricks. I used to work out in the garden. You'd take your turn either hoeing and then they had these watering cans that were really heavy. Only the boys picked them up 'cause they were too heavy. But they used to plant things, vegetables. I don't know who ate the vegetables or anything, but. . . .

RCM: You don't seem to remember . . .

RM: No, I don't know, you know, what all happened. But. . . .

WN: You said that you were the only Haole in the school. Were you aware of that at the time?

RM: I don't know. We have the pictures and I'm the only one there. Everybody else is something else.

(Laughter)

MM: I guess at the time Lāna'i City was being built so.

RM: Yes, probably, right.

MM: Hawaiian or Japanese or something.

RM: Yes, or probably a mixture, whatever.

WN: Was it difficult for you at that time? Do you remember any incidents or anything like that?

RM: No, I don't think so. I don't remember any. I probably wouldn't have known the difference (chuckles).

MM: What did you do for recreation, like on weekends, or . . .

RM: I don't know. I don't remember a weekend as such. I know on Sunday, breakfast was later. Eight o'clock, instead of seven o'clock. And we'd sometimes have, I guess it was waffles. And I remember my father, he could never understand why we had a regular breakfast and then had waffles on a non-working day. Why we should eat extra on a non-working day. And then you had one o'clock lunch, which was again an hour later. And then, the cooks went off and they didn't come back and make dinner. I guess we had soup or something, I don't remember what it was.

RCM: Was I there?

RM: No, you were working [in Honolulu] by then.

MM: So your meals and everything sounded very structured.

RM: Yes, we had breakfast at seven, and lunch at twelve, and dinner at six. And they had a triangle out on the porch, on the veranda, and

when dinner was ready or lunch was ready, they'd ring that. You were supposed to be there. And you always had fruit for breakfast. You always had cooked cereal, which I disliked. And . . .

WN: Oatmeal?

RM: Oatmeal and Cream of Wheat and Wheatina. I didn't like any of those things.

RCM: I don't know why she's so fussy. She's fussy about things (chuckles).

RM: Then for lunch, they always had salad. In those days, they had certain kinds of salads. You didn't just make a tossed green salad. They had a type of salad. And then I guess we had hot food, too, at lunch. Didn't they serve hot food at lunchtime, too, sometimes?

RCM: Yes, I guess.

RM: At breakfast, too, sometimes, they would have a platter of lambchops, rib lambchops. There would be a great platter of these little tiny chops, sort of one bite, I guess, along the rib. And then dinner was always soup, and your main course, then your dessert.

MM: Could you ever go to work for your grandfather? Or with your father?

RM: No, no, no. Once in a rare while I would get to ride with him if he was going to just go down and do something, like down to the machine shop or something. But, work was work, and I don't suppose that the boss would approve of his little girl riding around, (chuckles) with him, you know. So it's a rare occasion that you went.

But they [Hawaiian Pineapple Company] had cute, old company cars. Golly, I bet that it would be worth, it'd be a mint if you had them today. They're all alike and I think that they were Dodges, I'm not sure. But they all had canvas tops. They all had even the rumble seat.

WN: Rumble seat?

RM: And they're always full of red dirt because of that dust and everything. And all had those running boards. And in my mind's eye, I kind of see that thing up on the hood, because old cars used to always have something up there. It was a round thing like this and that's what makes me think it was a Dodge. I don't know. It's sort of in my mind's eye, and the car wheels were, the spokes were wood, I think.

MM: When you see old newspaper articles, I think, they show all the cars lined up.

WN: Oh, yeah?

RM: They did that when they brought all of the fancy people in. When I went away to college, I went one summer and I was visiting one of my classmates, and her grandfather was one of those men who went to Lāna'i way back then. I don't remember what his name was. I wish I did. But it was interesting. It's sort of a small world. You know, of all the people in the world, I would meet somebody in Hollywood who had been on that . . .

MM: It was a big event.

RM: Yeah, I guess it was.

WN: What is this? What event is this?

RM: I don't know. They did something and . . .

MM: They opened up Lāna'i City and . . .

WN: Oh, oh, oh, I see.

RM: . . . had all these men from different places and this man came from Hollywood, . . .

MM: A lot of legislators.

RM: Yes. A lot of these were Mainland people, too. And they all wore these fancy boots with the leggings and the jodhpur-type pants. And all had hats and coat and tie on. You know, very formal.

MM: So were you there when that happened?

RM: I just remember it, just as a little kid but don't ask me when it was [probably around 1927].

MM: Yeah. Do you remember, was there a special event?

RM: I wouldn't know. The only memory I have is watching all these cars go by, these Fords, black Model-Ts. That's all I have, memory of it.

WN: What type of man was your father? How would you describe him?

RM: Oh, he's a lovely man (chuckles). One of a kind. When people would meet him on the street, you might say their day was better for having seen him. He was that type of a man. Just a nice, nice man. Everybody liked him.

WN: Was he like your grandfather?

RM: No, I think he's kind of different from Grandfather. They're different, but they're both very nice men. My father had a great

sense of humor. And if he was in a good mood, he could just keep people just . . .

RCM: He'd keep you laughing all over.

RM: Yes, hysterical. Just laugh and laugh and laugh. He used to tell a story about when he was a young man. He didn't go to college. Grandfather put him to work for Honolulu Ironworks as a, forget the word, when you learn a trade.

MM: Apprentice?

RM: Apprentice at Honolulu Ironworks. And he was a young man, and I guess he was living down here by himself, not with the family. And he was invited out to dinner someplace. And he had on his coat and tie when he went to the dinner, and he was sitting at the table. And he reached, I guess, to butter his bread or something, and his coat buttons caught in this water glass, and tipped the water down his sleeve. So he unhooked the glass very nonchalantly, and he put his arm down like this, and let all the water (laughter) run out. But the way he would tell it, you know, it was funny. He'd just keep people roaring with laughter. He'd always meet people with a smile and a . . .

WN: I guess that's how he learned how to be an engineer, at the ironworks.

RM: Yes, right. But I know when he was transferred from there [Lāna'i] down here [in 1939], I know that the men down up there really hated to see him go because he was somebody that they could always talk to. Was very fond of him. And I think one of the men up there who used to work under him named their son after him. Mr. Sawada, I think was his name. Sawada. I think he named one of his sons after Daddy.

WN: You mean James?

MM: James, yes.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MM: Well, one of the things that I heard about George Munro . . .

(Taping garbled.)

MM: . . . was that he was very good at speaking Hawaiian.

RM: Right, yes, he was.

MM: They turned to him for everything.

RM: Right, yes.



MM: Including law enforcement.

RM: Yes, right, yes, yes.

MM: And if there was ever a problem, they looked to him.

RM: Yes, right.

MM: So did he learn how to speak Hawaiian on Lāna'i?

RM: He did speak Hawaiian, right.

RCM: Jim did, too.

RM: My father did, too, right.

MM: Did they learn on Lāna'i?

RM: Oh, I'm sure. I don't know. Where else would they have learned?

RCM: On Kaua'i.

RM: On Kaua'i? I never thought of that. But I remember them coming up and talking. They had come up to the front porch and asked for Daddy. And they'd stand and talk Hawaiian for a long time, sometimes. Maybe somebody had a problem or something, and they'd come up and talk to him in Hawaiian. And I don't remember my grandfather talking Hawaiian, but I guess he did when, you know, he was around them more. She would remember that more than I would.

RCM: No, he spoke Hawaiian.

RM: But it's easier for a young kid to pick it up, you know, when they're out that way. I'm sure that's how he learned it.

WN: Was your dad the oldest . . .

RM: Yes.

WN: . . . child?

RM: Yes. He was the oldest and he was the first to go. That's too bad. [James Munro passed away in 1962.]

WN: Was he ever groomed to possibly take over as manager of the ranch?

RM: No, I don't think so. No, he wasn't with the ranch, you see. He was with Hawaiian Pine. And . . .

MM: What was Hector's position [i.e., Hector Munro, George Munro's nephew]?

RM: Hector, did he come to work on the ranch and then go to work for

Hawaiian Pine or what?

RCM: He worked on the ranch a little while and then . . .

RM: I guess he didn't care for ranching. Then he went to Hawaiian Pine. And I don't know what they used to call the men, but they grew the pineapples and they each had a section overseer that they oversaw or whatever it was.

RCM: Supervisor.

RM: Supervisor, I guess that was it. I don't know. But then he retired and he came down here. He lived out 'Āina Haina. And he managed a nightclub, it was called The Clouds in Waikīkī, on Kapahulu, I think it was, someplace down there. But he used to manage--sort of a far cry from growing pineapples, but . . .

WN: Hector?

RM: Yes, Hector. That's what he did. And then he sold his 'Āina Haina house and they moved to one of the apartments down there in Waikīkī, Dad Center's apartment building, I think it was. He managed that for a while. And then they moved to, is it, the Tradewinds down there? Right across from the 'Ilikai. He lived there for quite a while, too, he and his wife.

MM: Did they have any children?

RM: Yes, they had three boys. There was Edward. They used to call Noel. He lives in San Francisco. And then there was Bob. He worked for the insurance companies here for a while and now he's over in L.A., working there. And he had some kids. Ed didn't get married. And then there's Bill, who was with the U.S. forestry. And I think he's in Washington now, I'm not sure.

MM: Washington state?

RM: No, D.C., I think. And then one of his daughters went into there. She worked for Weyer[hauser], that paper lumber company.

MM: Weyerhauser.

RM: Yes, Weyerhauser. I think she worked for them. I'm not sure, but she used to go out into the forest, into the woods, and give them an estimate as to the number of running feet they could get out of the trees for the lumber. But, it's interesting.

WN: What about your dad? After leaving Lāna'i, what did he do?

RM: Oh, we came down here to Mott Smith Drive and we lived there and he worked in the [Hawaiian Pineapple Company] head office down here, Iwilei. And then, I went off to school and so I really wasn't involved with that too much anymore. Then, I think he went out to

Wahiawā and, I think, was he manager out there for a while, when somebody was on vacation or something? I don't remember. I was out doing my own thing and I don't really remember. Then when he retired, I went to his retirement party. But then they moved to the other side of the island. They lived out in Kahalu'u for a while. They built a house out there right after the war. And then they sold that and they moved to Manoa for a while and then they bought a house in Kailua, 1005 Kailua Road, which was just before you get into Kailua, it's on the right. There's a big, big water tank and he's down in that area. They lived there (until Father died). He had quite a big piece of property there.

WN: So you started going to school in Honolulu from second grade on and you . . .

RM: Yes, second grade, and I lived with Grandfather and her [RCM]. And then when Grandfather got married, just us lived here, and here we are.

WN: So by that time, by the time you started going school in second grade, your grandfather was already here?

RM: Yes, right.

WN: Back and forth?

RM: Right. He was going back and forth. And we had different members of the family live here for a while for one reason or another and. . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

(Sound interference on tape.)

RM: We used to have loads of people in this [Makiki] house. But in the old days, you had one bathroom. You had one bathroom and that was that. That [second bathroom] was added later. But you go into houses nowadays and every kid has their own bathroom and, you know, if it doesn't have four or five bathrooms in the house it's outdated. We grew up with sometimes ten, twelve people in the house, and nobody ever had a problem. One bathroom. You all took your turn in the shower and that was it (chuckles).

MM: I know we have one bathroom.

RCM: I never thought about it till now.

RM: The house was built by a contractor for his own family. Mr. Lewis.

RCM: This house, yes.

RM: And Grandfather bought it from him and. . . .

WN: So who moved into the ranch house after, I mean . . .

RM: After we moved [to Honolulu], the Vredenburgs. They used to live in the other house where the Forbeses used to live. And when the Forbeses left, I guess the Vredenburgs moved in and they [later] moved into our house. And then, I don't know what happened to them. There's Ernest and Tosie, and they had an adopted daughter Viola, and she went to [St. Andrews] Priory. And I don't know, I guess that sometime after the war they did away with the ranch [1951]. And they bulldozed the big house. It's too bad.

RCM: That's disgusting.

MM: You have any idea when that [ranch manager's] house was built?

RM: No, it wasn't new when they got there, I know that. It was old.

MM: Because the Gays lived in it . . .

RCM: For a while. For a very short time, though.

RM: So, it must have been pretty old. Was it built with inside bathrooms in the beginning, do you know?

RCM: No.

RM: It had two bathrooms in the main house. The one that was nearest the living room was fairly modern. It had a separate shower and it had a hand basin and it had a tub that stood on legs. The other bathroom that was down by the dining room had a handmade metal tub. It was all bolts, little tiny bolts, so if you were sitting in the tub, and you slid back (chuckles), it wasn't very comfortable. And then it had a wooden thing around it. It was quite old-fashioned. And then it had a shower and hand basin.

My father got interested in photography and he had an old German camera. It was a Leica and he used to take pictures, and then he used that, the bathroom, as his darkroom. And it was before anybody had even fans, air-conditioning, and it used to get so hot in there every so often. But he'd come home at lunchtime and he'd have some picture that he wanted to enlarge or develop or everything. When he came down here [Honolulu] he didn't have a darkroom and it was too bad because he would have, I'm sure, enjoyed doing it. But, it's a great hobby with him and I've got all kinds of old thirty-five millimeter pictures, negatives, and those negatives that are developed so you can put the picture on the screen. He was a good photographer. He used to take some pretty good pictures.

MM: Do you have any of Lāna'i?

RM: You mean of his things? Well, let's see. He didn't start taking pictures at that time because I guess it was somewhere in the early '30s when he first started taking pictures. He went around the world on a vacation trip in '38, just before the world war started in Europe. They got to Italy. Their boat was in Rome. And I don't think they got off, because there was too many demonstrations going on. And they were supposed to have gotten off and gone through Italy, France, Germany, up to England, and then come home that way. And they stayed on board the boat because it was getting kind of, they were scared to get off, I think. There were too many demonstrations going on. And he took pictures at that time. He took pictures of my sister when she was a little kid. So it must have been early '30s. And see, there was no place up there to do the developing. So I guess that's why he got interested in it in the first place. He used to take pictures all over the place. I don't know what happened to the camera. He loaned it to somebody. I was going to get him one. I asked him if he wanted me get him one when I went to Germany one time, but he said, no, he'd lost interest by then. But he loved that camera.

WN: So after you finished college, did you ever visit Lāna'i again, go back?

RC: I've been back twice. I went for the opening of the Munro Trail and then, . . .

WN: Do you remember when that was? [Nineteen fifty-five.]

RC: Grandfather was still alive but he didn't go. His [second] wife went, Jessie. We stayed at the Lāna'i Inn, and Jessie went, I'm sure, right. The three of us were in one bedroom. I'm sure. No, you and I had one bedroom. She had one to herself. But then I went again with some of my cousins. One of my cousins' son, he flies for Hawaiian [Airlines] and he bought a house up there. First house, first road on the left, when you come to the city. And we all stayed there, had a nice weekend, but it's not the same. Beautiful weather. We stopped at the ranch (chuckles) and I was very bittersweet. And that's before they started building [Kō'eale Lodge]. I haven't seen the new building, but I don't know.

MM: It's a beautiful building, but . . .

RM: It seems to me if they had gone for atmosphere-type . . .

RCM: They should have gone for more . . .

RM: . . . housing . . .

RCM: . . . things of that nature.

RM: Because the world is full of fancy hotels. And they could have, you know, made this. . . . Like some of the ski places you'd go to. They're very, you know, atmospherish.

RCM: Very nice.

RM: And they don't have fancy modern-type stuff, so you feel like you're someplace else. And I think if they had done that with [Lāna'i], because all the islands have big fancy hotels.

RCM: Yes, I think that's . . .

RM: And they could have made that city a cute, little atmospheric place. And those [Norfolk] pine trees in the park, in the city there, when I was there it was so pretty. And they had grown so, you know, and there are great big trees and it really looked very pretty. And I thought if they had just gone on with that, you know, they had a good basis there.

MM: Is this by the town square?

RM: Yeah. It's pretty.

MM: And what was your first impression when you went back and you saw the trees? (Chuckles)

RM: It was pretty. Very pretty, you know. And, when we went to the ranch, I was amazed at how small some of these trees were. Two [avocado] trees were still there. And I remember them as great, big trees that I used to climb. And they looked so small, and, you know, kind of scrubby-looking.

(Laughter)

MM: And rose apple tree? (Chuckles)

RM: I don't know if the rose apple tree was still there or not. I don't remember.

MM: No, they just, they just . . .

RM: Yeah, that went with the bulldozer.

MM: No, they just chopped it down . . .

RM: Oh, recently?

MM: I think they made way for the hotel.

RM: Oh, too bad. Too bad.

WN: Was the ranch house still there when you went back in the '50s?

RM: No. Neither time was it still there. It was long gone.

MM: I think right after Vredenburg left [in 1951].

RM: Yes, I'm sure. You couldn't even see that there had been a house there. There was no cornerstone, no bricks where the chimney rose. There was nothing there to tell you there had [once] been a house there, which I thought was really kind of too bad.

RCM: Just a shame.

RM: About the only thing that was still there, I think the concrete pathway that was higher off the road and you would drive up and it would be about as high as the running board was. And that was still there. And then there was a survey marker there, bench mark, that was still there. But not much else.

MM: The rain gauge.

RM: Rain gauge, yes, the rain gauge. I have a rain gauge upstairs. It's an old one that came from up there.

MM: Did you ever have to check the rain gauge? I mean, whose duty was it?

RM: No, I think, Grandfather or maybe even my dad did it. I think mostly Grandfather.

MM: They were real good about keeping statistics.

RM: Yes. He was interested so he did it.

WN: The Norfolk pine [fronting the manager's house] is still there, though.

RCM: It better be, by gosh.

RM: It doesn't look too healthy, does it?

MM: But it gets lost in the middle of that hotel.

RM: Oh, the hotel is right by the tree?

MM: Right next to it.

RM: Right next to it, oh.

RCM: Oh, what a shame.

RM: Too bad.

WN: That's the one that was struck by lightning [in 1903].

RM: Yes, right. Evidently it struck. There's a scar there for many, many years.

MM: You can still see it.

RM: Evidently it killed the cat that was sleeping on the porch or whatever. Is that right?

MM: It hit the tree, it went down a rod, a lightning rod. And the cat was sleeping under the house.

RM: Yes, and it killed the cat. It's before my time, but I remember hearing about it.

MM: And it knocked . . .

RM: Did something else, too.

MM: I guess it was [James] Kauila. It knocked him to the floor?

RM: Oh, really? Oh, he was there at the time?

MM: I think so.

RCM: Oh, my.

WN: Well, is there anything else that you'd like to add before we turn off the machine?

RM: That's it. (Chuckles)

WN: Okay, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW



# **LĀNA'I RANCH**

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